

Six easy steps make a recipe for disaster: The method

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Six easy steps make a recipe for disaster



Step one: Once the coca plant has reached maturity, after about three years, the leaves can be stripped every 35 days, to reap the cocaine alkaloid.

Step two: Coca paste is extracted. The leaves are usually dried in the sun. They are then put in a shallow pit, lined with strong black plastic and saturated with a mixture of water and a little sulphuric acid. Three or four times a day, workers get into the pit bare-

foot, the solution up to their thighs, and mash the leaves.

After about three days, the leaves are grayish, indicating they have given up their alkaloids of which cocaine, a nitrogen-based compound is the principal one. The liquid, now containing a powdery residue, is then drawn off and filtered. What is left is coca paste, crude cocaine about 25 per cent pure. It is dried in the sun.

Step three: To get cocaine base, the coca paste is given a series of chemical baths; mixed with lime water, gasoline, sulphuric acid and potassium per-

manganate. The resulting reddish brown liquid is filtered. To the clear liquid that emerges they then add a few drops of ammonia. The liquid turns milky and curdles, and is filtered again.

What is left are ivory-coloured granules; cocaine base, about 75 per cent pure. They are dried under lamps or in the sun.

Step four: The basic equipment for making cocaine hydrochloride includes: kitchen utensils for measuring and mixing; basic chemistry glassware; electric fans (for ventilation); elec-

tric mixers; large funnels and filter cloth or paper; hydrometers; heat lamps; hydraulic presses; non-stick containers; weights and scales.

The chemicals required are: ethyl ether, acetone, sulphuric acid, hydrochloric acid, ammonium hydroxide, potassium permanganate, ethenol, and sodium carbonate.

1. To cocaine base add ether and a mixture of acetone and hydrochloric acid. Mix and let stand for several hours.

2. The result is a crystalline precipitate which is filtered several times.

3. The crystals are mixed with acetone and hydrochloric acid, and filtered again several times.

4. The resulting white powder is dried on long drying tables under heat lamps.

Step five: Before it goes to market, cocaine is "cut" or diluted with some inert ingredient.

Step six: Crack is produced by dissolving cocaine hydrochloride in water and heating the liquid in a pan — on the kitchen stove — with baking soda. The result is a solid chunk of crystals which is then broken up into tiny "rocks". Paul Eddy

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